

FINANCE & IT NEWS

Information bulletin from the Finance & IT Department

No.40 JUNE 2005

BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. **Council Tax and Business Rates Collection – (Contact Officer Alan Cartwright Ext. 3612)**

	At 24/06/05	At 25/06/04
	%	%
Council Tax	25.7	25.6
Business Rates	27.5	28.2

2. **Processing of Benefit Claims – (Contact Officers Joe Feeney Ext. 3694 and Donna Barrow-Jones Ext. 3637)**

Processing performance is shown in the table.

Category	01/04/05 TO 30/06/05	2005/2006 Target
New claims (days to process)	31	42
% of New Claims processed within 14 days	73%	80%
Changes in Circumstances (days to process)	19.5	10

3. **Benefit Fraud (Contact Officers Paul Wadsworth Ext. 3607 and John Robinson Ext. 3670)**

Fraud penalties issued so far for 2005/06 are as follows:

Sanction Applied	No. of Cases	Subsidy from DWP
LA Caution	10	£12,000
Administrative Penalty	12	£14,400
Summons Issued (court hearing awaited)		
Successful Prosecutions	10	£32,000
Total	32	£58,400

4. **Benefit Intervention Visits (Contact Officers Joe Feeney Ext. 3694 and Lesley O'Halloran Ext. 3658)**

- Performance figures for April:

Home Visits	778
Postal checks	390
Data matches	53
Total	<u>1,221</u>

5. **Payment of Undisputed Invoices – (Contact Officer Steve Clegg Ext. 2260)**

The % of invoices processed within 30 days (or within terms) for the April and May 2005 is 91.5%. The cumulative total is 91.7% for the year 2004/05 and we are striving to improve on this. The average for other GMAMT Councils is 88.7% and the Government's target is 100%.

DEPARTMENTAL KEY TASKS AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

5. Payment of Council Bills (Contact Officer Alan Cartwright Ext. 3612)

Payments at Post Offices and PayPoint agents continue in line with expectations and completely without problem.

The value of Internet transactions consistently exceeds £200,000 per month since April and now accounts for over 22% (by number and by value) of all credit/debit card transactions.

Payments received via the Credit card line showed an increase in the number of transactions of over 47% for the same period last year (up 36% by value).

The 24/7 Automated Telephone Service (launched in December 2003) is now the most popular way of paying by credit/debit card and has taken over 40% by number of all credit/debit card transactions since April (37% by value).

The figures show the position for the period 1 April 2005 to 30 June 2005.

	No.	
	000's	£'m
Post Office	151.2	8.036
PayPoint	27.1	1.185
Telephone	11.1	1.169
Internet	6.6	0.635
Automated Telephone	12.1	1.055

Customers have been able to pay any council bill by credit/debit card at both Leigh and Wigan cash offices following the upgrade to the cash receipting system (May 2004). Since April over 1,700 payments have been taken. The agreement with HSBC through

Co-op Bank now allows us to accept payment by customers who present the Visa Electron card.

Following decriminalisation of Parking, fines can be paid by credit/debit card using any of the above mentioned facilities as well as at the newly opened office in the Market where 82 transactions have been accepted since April. Payment can also be made at Leigh and Wigan cash offices or any Post Office or Paypoint agent.

6. NNDR – (Contact Officer Alan Cartwright Ext. 3612)

In the April Bulletin, I advised of progress with the conversion of the NNDR system and of the changes to Business Rates coming in from 1 April 2005 including the new scheme of relief for Small Businesses.

The take-up of the new Small Business Relief scheme has been excellent. Over 2,000 small businesses have been awarded relief of about £1.065m. In addition and with other businesses outside of the criteria for direct help from the scheme (known as being in the Buffer Zone), additional relief is being given by way of charges being calculated with reference to a lower multiplier. Two modules - refunds and integration with the Comino Electronic Document Management system - were initially delayed as a matter of other priorities. Refunds - through the new Agresso system - are now live and development to enable integration with EDM is underway.

The various stages of recovery actions each require some development to implement. 3 stages - issues of reminders, final notices and bailiff documents - have been completed. Stages to enable us to issue summonses in

order to obtain liability orders, and to allow existing liability orders to be brought back to court, are now under development.

The first Court is booked for the end of July - much in line with previous years court hearings.

Following conversion, the application of the new 2005 Rating List and the new scheme of relief for Small Businesses has inevitably delayed day to day processing. This situation is partly reflected in the collection rate being slightly down when compared to the same period last year (reported elsewhere in this bulletin).

To help counteract this position, short-term temporary additional resources are being obtained from specialist sources and other existing permanent staff are undertaking training in the new system and in NNDR legislation so they can act as support staff during this financial year.

Performance during the year will continue to be regularly measured and reported.

INFOBULLETIN/JLW